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Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of	)	Some of the state
Implementation of the	)	CC Docket No. 96-98
Local Competition Provisions of the	)	
Telecommunications Act of 1996	)	
	)	

## COMMENTS OF CABLE AND WIRELESS, INC.

Cable and Wireless, Inc. ("C&W"), by its attorneys, respectfully submits the following support for the petitions for reconsideration filed by AT&T Corp. ("AT&T"), Birch Telecom, Inc. ("Birch"), The Competitive Telecommunications Commission ("CompTel"), MCI WorldCom, Inc. ("MCI WorldCom") and Sprint Corporation ("Sprint") of the *Third Report and Order*, as amended by the *Supplemental Order*, in the above-captioned docket. These petitions request the Commission to raise the four-line cutoff for the exemption from the unbundling requirement for local switching. For the reasons explained below, C&W urges the Commission to raise the four-line cutoff as these petitions request by setting it at the DS-1 interface.

C&W is a preeminent provider of data, Internet, and long distance services with ongoing plans to integrate and upgrade its networks in order to provide a full range of integrated, basic and advanced telecommunications services packages to consumers. As such, C&W is intensely interested in the outcome of this proceeding. C&W currently is focusing on a two-year plan to upgrade, enhance, and expand its network in order to maintain its status as a preeminent provider of a full range of advanced voice and data services. However, despite C&W's ongoing

Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Third Report and Order and Fourth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CC Docket No. 96-98, FCC 99-238 (1999) ("Third Report and Order").

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investments, C&W's ability to maintain and improve its market position will be extremely limited, if not impossible, if local telecommunications opportunities are limited or foreclosed by ILEC noncompliance with the procompetitive, market-opening obligations of the 1996 Act. The *Third Report and Order* goes far towards increasing the opportunities for telecommunications competition. However, the four-line cutoff for the exemption from unbundling of local switching could inadvertently prevent small business and residential users from receiving the benefits created by vigorous competition in the telecommunications marketplace. The four-line cutoff is inconsistent with the impair standard, unsupported by the record, and too low to foster competition as envisioned by the 1996 Act. Therefore, the Commission should replace the four-line cutoff with a DS-1 cutoff, and clarify that once a customer enjoys service from a competitive carrier using a local switching UNE, it will not subsequently lose this service simply because it grows to the point that it meets the exemption criteria.

# I. THE COMMISSION SHOULD USE THE DS-1 INTERFACE AS THE CUTOFF FOR EXEMPTION FROM UNBUNDLING OF LOCAL SWITCHING

The Commission should reconsider the four-line cutoff for the exemption from the unbundling requirement for local switching because it ignores a finding of impairment under the 1996 Act in favor of a false assumption that is not supported by any evidence on the record. As the petitions for reconsideration of AT&T,<sup>2</sup> Birch,<sup>3</sup> CompTel, MCI WorldCom and Sprint<sup>4</sup> demonstrate, the four-line cutoff should be raised because it is irrational and inconsistent with the requirements of the 1996 Act.

The four-line cutoff rule is based on the Commission's attempt to identify the demarcation between the market for medium and large business customers and the mass market,

See AT&T Petition at 12-19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Birch Petition at 3-9.

Sprint Petition at 7-9.

which includes both residential and small business customers. However, the Commission provides no support for choosing four lines as the demarcation point, finding (without citing any record evidence) that this demarcation "reasonably captures the division between the mass market . . . and the medium and large business market." C&W agrees with Sprint, CompTel and others that the overwhelming majority of small businesses, and an increasing number of residences, uses more than 3 lines. As Sprint points out in its petition, a conservative and frequently used definition for "small businesses" includes all businesses that employ fewer than 100 persons. Businesses with 50-99 employees use an average of 22 phone lines. This alone demonstrates that the four-line rule is too narrow and contrary to the record evidence.

C&W respectfully submits that the Commission could better foster competition within the small business and residential market by applying the impair standard based on the record evidence in this proceeding rather than by trying to define the mass markets in terms of the average number of lines used. C&W agrees with CompTel and AT&T that any exemption should be based on an analysis of the costs and delays of ordering termination of individual circuits rather than based strictly on the average number of lines used by small businesses. As CompTel explained in its petition, the manual provisioning systems of the ILECs impose excessive costs and delays on competitive carriers that order termination of individual circuits. These costs and delays become a smaller percentage of the overall costs of service where carriers seek higher capacity end-user interfaces. To

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Third Report and Order at ¶294.

Sprint Petition at 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Id.

id.

CompTel Petition at 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> *Id*.

C&W agrees with AT&T that the four-line rule, because it is based on an arbitrary definition of the mass market, does not reflect the actual economic and operational considerations that new entrants face when they assess the viability of aggregating multiple loops at a customers location.<sup>11</sup> C&W also agrees with CompTel that the four-line rule ignores the reality of serving today's *small* business and residential market.<sup>12</sup> As both AT&T and Sprint demonstrate in their petitions, more than 20 percent of all business customers in density Zone 1 locations have four or more lines.<sup>13</sup> Because four lines is well below the point at which competitive carriers can serve customers without experiencing the costs and delays imposed by the standard, manual hot-cut provisioning of analog loops, customers with four or more lines are the same as customers with three or less lines from an economic and operational standpoint.<sup>14</sup> In sum, the four-line rule does not reflect the economic reality competitive carriers face when deciding whether to aggregate voice grade loops onto a higher capacity facility.<sup>15</sup>

C&W agrees with the majority of petitioners addressing this issue, including AT&T, Birch CompTel and MCI WorldCom, that many competitive carriers use self-supplied switching capacity to provide service at the DS-1 interface level and above. Accordingly, the DS-1 interface level is the most rational cutoff for the Commission's exemption from unbundled local switching, because this is the point at which competitive carriers can avoid the cumbersome individual loop manual hot-cut provisioning processes, which the Commission has found impair the ability of carriers to compete without the unbundled local switching UNE. 16

AT&T Petition at 13.

See, e.g., CompTel Petition at 4.

AT&T Petition at 17.

<sup>14</sup> Id. at 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 15.

<sup>16</sup> Id. at 16.

AT&T asks the Commission to limit the exemption to customers with eight lines or more because it believes that newer DSL technology is becoming available that may ultimately permit competitive carriers efficiently to aggregate loops for customers with as few as eight lines<sup>17</sup> Although AT&T may be correct that, as rates become more cost-based, customers will begin using a DS-1 interface when they have fewer than 24 lines, C&W agrees with CompTel and MCI-WorldCom that the Commission should use the DS-1 interface itself, rather than a specific line count, as the exemption limit. The MCI WorldCom petition demonstrates that the DS-1 interface is both easier to administer than a rule based on line counts and more closely tied to the impair standard, as required by the 1996 Act.<sup>18</sup>

C&W also supports AT&T's request that the Commission clarify the rules governing application of the exemption. Specifically, the Commission should clarify that, for exemption purposes, (1) if there are multiple end users at a single physical location, each customer must be treated as a separate "end user," (2) if a single business customer has multiple physical location in an area, each location must be treated as a separate "end user," and (3) lines employing DSL technology where no connection to the circuit switched network is likely (which is true for all DSL technologies except ADSL) must not be counted towards the exemption. <sup>19</sup>

Finally, C&W agrees with AT&T and Birch that customers who receive service from carriers using unbundled local switching should continue to receive unbundled local switching if they subsequently outgrow the exemption. Customers should never be forced to forfeit pre-existing service arrangements using unbundled local switching simply because their telecommunication needs have increased. Unless the Commission explicitly adopts this

<sup>17</sup> Id. at 18.

MCI WorldCom Petition at 22.

AT&T Petition at 17-18.

See, e.g., id. at 18; Birch Petition at 9.

clarification, competitive carriers and their customers could find themselves disqualified from unbundled local switching for any of their lines, and even experience service disruptions when the ILEC withdraws unbundled local switching.<sup>21</sup>

### II. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the Commission should deny the petition for reconsideration filed by Bell Atlantic and grant the petitions for reconsideration filed by AT&T, Birch, CompTel, MCI WorldCom and Sprint by replacing the four-line cutoff for exemption from the local switching unbundling requirement with a cutoff at the DS-1 interface.

Respectfully submitted,

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March 22, 2000

### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Tracey Sorenson, hereby certify that on this 22<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2000, I caused a true and correct copy of the foregoing "Comments of Cable And Wireless, Inc." to be served, via first-class mail, postage prepaid, upon the following:

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